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Discussion papers submitted by major groups

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Addendum

Discussion paper on water, sanitation and human settlements submitted by non-governmental organizations

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I. Introduction

1. Issues relating to water, sanitation and human settlements are indeed complex and invariably inter-connected, although an overall understanding of how base issues function together is something few can claim to know. In this regard, an integrated approach is essential, and the lack thereof is perhaps the biggest barrier to effective implementation of programmes on these issues.

2. A crisis of global magnitude is looming owing to inadequate access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation. The compelling statistics are well-known and urgently demand action.

3. A fundamentally new approach to water, sanitation and human settlements will be needed if the aim is to satisfy the water needs of 8 to 10 billion people while protecting the ecosystems that sustain our economies and terrestrial life. Evolving strategies to ensure sustainable livelihoods and communities is at the heart of a resolution to this crisis.

II. Perspectives of non-governmental organizations on the status of implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in relation to water, sanitation and human settlements

Issues that require attention, including identified obstacles and barriers

4. There are many issues that arise with regard to the issues of water, sanitation and human settlements. To identify the root-causes for the failure of implementation of policies in this field, we must provide a perspective on the complexity of the problem. First, we present the barrier of low public participation.

A. Public participation

5. At the root of much of the failure of policy in this area is the lack of public participation, including that of organized forms of the public such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such participation, some would argue, is the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Participation is low owing not only to governance failures, but also due to lack of awareness. People still do not understand the concept of sustainability and do not know how they can contribute to its achievement. In this regard, the lack of focused attention in the education system may be a factor. In any event, there are gaps and divergences in the efforts of Governments and NGOs to increase awareness among citizen groups.

6. Governments need to support and reinforce the efforts of the NGO community in this respect. This would lead to greater participation of the public in promoting sustainable development, especially at local levels. In the United Kingdom, issues of sustainability are now being included in school curriculums, for example, through the Sustainable Design Awards for 16 to 18 year olds and the Sustainable Technology Education Project for 11 to 16 year olds. Such programmes should be encouraged, replicated and amply funded to increase awareness.

7. At the intergovernmental level, avenues for public participation in managing transboundary watercourses will be essential to ensuring better governance and reducing conflict among nations. An example of this is the 1995 Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, signed by 13 countries. The Protocol promotes public awareness, public participation and environmental impact assessment as management tools for transboundary watercourses. Within the same region, the 1999 Shared Rivers Initiative seeks to achieve equitable distribution of water resources in the Icomati River Basin and, eventually, in other international river basins. The initiative, which has established a basin wide research agenda and a network of scientists, hopes to foster research that generates legitimate data in a transparent and politically acceptable way and to develop a methodology that can be applied to other, more complex, basins in the region. There are numerous other examples, all illustrating the enormous added value of public participation in decision-making.

B. Water

1. Water is a fundamental human right

8. The fact that water is not treated as a basic human right remains a major impediment to equitable access, distribution and use of water. Water is a fundamental life-support, which cannot be treated as a commercial commodity, with supply and demand manipulated to increase its value and with alternatives that can be substituted. Water is a public trust issue that must not be privatized. New developments in international human rights law provide a viable framework to measure and improve government performance. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations has elaborated specific rights, roles and responsibilities at different levels and provides an enforceable framework for recognizing water as a human right. For instance, the Committee has determined that Governments are now accountable to taking specific, measurable steps towards fulfilling the right to water. It has also specified in detail the rights of communities, the obligations of Governments and even identified what constitutes a violation.

9. The right to water is included in many other laws, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol of San Salvador and others. However, these and other human rights obligations are not being taken seriously enough by national Governments.

2. State sovereignty

10. Governments must assert their primary responsibility for providing and regulating water and sanitation services. The obligation to protect the right to water includes the obligation to prevent third parties, including corporations, from interfering with the enjoyment of that right. States must therefore retain sovereignty over water as a resource and adopt effective legislation and strong regulatory frameworks to ensure that third parties do not deny rights of equal access or pollute or inequitably extract water resources.

3. Incoherence in governance

11. Good governance implies the existence of a firm public authority responsible for fair distribution and equal treatment of users. It must ensure that the provision of services remains within the ambit of the public authority closest to the user. Public participation in decision-making and participation in reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of services provided will ensure transparency. Flexible modes of management must be explored. At present, incoherence prevails at both the policy formulation and institutional levels, hampering the implementation process.

(a) Policy incoherence

12. There is an absence of policy coherence within and among various government departments. There is little or no coordination among various agencies and actors. The lack of transparency in decision-making and participatory processes adds to the lack of ownership of actions and decisions at the local community level.

Lack of integrated water resource management policies

13. The absence of adequate emphasis on integrated water resource management policies and plans presents a major barrier in dealing with issues associated with water, sanitation and human settlements. Rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests and all other freshwater ecosystems are not just sources of supply, they are also habitats for a wide variety of plant and animal species. These ecosystems also perform valuable services for human societies, such as moderating floods and droughts, purifying water and sustaining fisheries. Nothing but a holistic ecosystem-based approach will suffice in addressing these issues.

Cross-cutting issues, water, sanitation and human settlements

14. Poverty and access to water have been repeatedly shown to be directly related. Unsustainable consumption and production patterns have a marked effect on people living in poverty, which in turn leads to resource degradation. The "domestication" of international commitments or securing "country ownership" of international policy prescriptions as a way to ensure functioning and sustainable local markets is one way forward in addressing linkages between international commitments, national policy goals and national budgets.

15. The focus on the Millennium Development Goals has been accompanied by a narrowing of the policy focus on a small number of blueprint models for water management and water delivery, such as privatization as a panacea for weak service delivery by national and local governments and a renewed attention to the need for large scale infrastructure.

16. Whereas these approaches have not proven their effectiveness in contributing to poverty alleviation, sustainable development or achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the singular focus on these water management and delivery options is crowding out alternatives that merit equal attention from Governments, donors and multilateral institutions. It is important to incorporate these approaches in the water management plans that are scheduled to be prepared by 2005 according to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

17. In point of fact, NGOs and other local actors, such as community organizations and local governments have a key role in identifying and developing options to

improve water management and service delivery. Too often, these initiatives are not encouraged let alone supported with resources. They are severely hampered by central policy decisions that fail to recognize their potential and limit their scope.

(b) Institutional incoherence

18. Coherence is a stumbling block to policy implementation, not just at the level of policy formulation but also at the institutional and inter-institutional level.

19. At the community level, governance can be improved by increasing the capacity of the community to raise funds and mobilize internal human and financial resources. Communities know their needs and their potential, and are well placed to outsource funds for community-scaled water developments.

20. At the international financial level, the rules and conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to control the public debt of developing countries must be modified in the specific case of water, sanitation and human settlement programmes. Budgetary constraints always impose greater burdens on the poorest of the poor. Specific directives should therefore be in place for protecting the public budgets for water and sanitation supply to the poorest communities. Any payments for water by users should not enter into government budgets as tax revenue. They must only be seen as payments for services.

21. Given renewed attention of multilateral financing organizations and bilateral donors for large scale infrastructure projects to help attain the Millennium Development Goals, it is of major importance that recommendations of the World Commission on Dams are followed on a national level, such as is happening in Nepal, Pakistan and South Africa. From the perspective of establishing effective participatory processes and identifying sustainable options for water management and provision, the key recommendations and guidelines of the World Commission on Dams are:

(a) To assure that decision-making processes related to large scale infrastructure projects allow for prior informed consent of all stakeholders, including local actors;

(b) That alternative management options are considered in the decision-making process.

Water privatization takes priority

22. Although the introduction of market mechanisms and an increased role of the private sector may theoretically lead to socially equitable and environmentally sustainable development, the introduction of economic instruments in the creation of water markets requires complex regulatory frameworks and institutions.

23. There is a tendency, however, to consider economic instruments and market mechanisms as an adequate way to respond to existing weaknesses of the public sector. As such, the increasing attention towards private sector involvement and the creation of markets for those goods and services that have been part of the public domain is a logical follow-up of the structural adjustment programmes and current Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) process of the World Bank, which call for a diminished role for the public sector.

24. In countries with weak institutional and legal frameworks, such an approach brings tremendous risks, and can generate new inequities and produce further stress on the environment. Therefore, the potential of water markets and private sector involvement should always be considered in nation-specific, institutional, socio-economic and legal contexts. Such policy analyses should always set out to assure access to clean drinking water as a basic human right, as well as to protect the ecological, economic and social (livelihood) functions of water-related ecosystems.

25. Endemic water shortages created by drought, inequitable geographic and social distribution of supply, population growth, wastage by agriculture and industry, lack of pollution control standards coupled with poor or non-existent waste water treatment cannot be addressed under most privatization schemes. It is Governments and their ability to govern resources, that need strengthening, hand-in-hand with civil society and local communities.

26. Addressing these problems often requires democratic and governance reforms, as was recognized in the Ministerial Declaration of The Hague on Water Security. The reality is that the present global market for water supply technology and services is large, undiversified and inequitable. This $400 billion dollar industry is controlled by just a few large multinationals, which subsidized, receiving export credits from their Governments and sharing in the benefits of development loans to the countries in which they agree to do business.

C. Human Settlements

27. Sustainable human settlements mean settlements where everyone's needs are met, using ways of managing resource use and waste generation that do not pass on costs to other locations or to future generations. It is crucial that people have the fundamental human right to housing.

28. Despite the work undertaken within the processes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, many problems persist and inequalities are growing. There is an urgent need for new approaches and for disseminating and scaling up existing examples of successful approaches.

29. International society should refrain from generalized approaches to issues confronting human settlements. Policy and support, including financial support, should focus on local action already initiated and on how communities and neighbourhoods can help themselves. Within this basic framework there are many different issues that must be considered.

Justice

30. Within cities there are major inequalities between neighbourhoods, something that city-wide indicators too often obscure or ignore. Poor neighbourhoods usually have the worst facilities, the poorest environments and inadequate economic development. This inequality contributes greatly to exclusion and the rise of security problems within cities. Urban regeneration schemes are extremely important to meet the needs of those suffering from environmental and social injustice, but these schemes rarely consider mapping neighbourhood-level environmental pressures, nor are they always participatory. Low-income settlements are often heterogeneous, with

certain groups finding themselves excluded within them. Other groups such as the elderly, the disabled or people of different ethnicities may also be excluded from local decision-making processes and power structures.

Poverty

31. Most Governments set their income-based poverty lines too low for urban populations, because they make little or no allowance for non-food needs. This means that they underestimate who is poor (and the depth of poverty) in those places where non-food needs are particularly expensive, that is in most cities where many or most poor groups face high costs for housing, water (purchased from vendors because they have no official supply), keeping children at school, health care, transport (to and from work and accessing services) and fuel. In many countries, the same income-based poverty line is set for rural and urban dwellers, even though many costs are higher in urban areas or in particular districts. The increasing use of the 1 United States dollar-a-day poverty line also greatly underestimates the scale of urban poverty because most urban households cannot meet their basic needs with an income of a dollar a day; the more monetized the economy and expensive the city, the more the dollar-a-day poverty line understates the scale of urban poverty.

32. There are also many aspects of urban and rural poverty that are not directly related to income levels, for instance civil and political rights and other democratic rights and the rule of law, or only partially related to income levels, for example poor quality housing and inadequate provision for water, sanitation, drainage and health care, which are often caused as much by ineffective governance as by the inability of poor households to pay.

The built environment, including housing

33. Human settlements consist of buildings, infrastructure and open spaces. Where buildings are built, how they are built, with what materials, for what purpose and who owns them are all elements that need to be considered in developing sustainable settlements. In many countries in the developing world, the regulations governing building standards were established in the colonial era, and were often copied from those of the colonial power. Most do not allow for the use of affordable, appropriate building materials, which are often more sustainable. In Kenya, for example, reform of these regulations has made a significant contribution to allowing poor women and men to build and occupy legal dwellings.

34. Many cities are experimenting with: ecological building; new social housing projects that prevent the insecure, poor living conditions that have marked low-income neighbourhoods across the world; decentralizing business districts and shopping districts; and building transportation hubs in such a manner that they invite use of public transport systems. In the case of the existing built environment, many richer nations have programmes to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and increase the "liveability" of neighbourhoods. They must be continued and scaled up.

35. Internationally, Governments have agreed to the target of the Millennium Development Goals to significantly improve the living conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers before 2020. Yet this is an unambitious goal given that there are 800 to 900 million people living in slums and that, by 2020, if action is not taken, 120 million new slum dwellers will have joined the ranks, thus outpacing the target. More improvements are needed in the form of land-distribution and land-

ownership, new building programmes and more attention to extending and improving basic infrastructure for water, sanitation and drainage. Many initiatives to improve the living conditions in slums are undertaken by organizations of slum-dwellers themselves. Many national Governments are responding to those needs, yet more could be done, especially in the field of microfinance.

36. The privatization of housing, especially in rich countries, decreases opportunities for the poor to access such housing. Massive privatization in some of the newly independent States has put over 90 per cent of the housing stock in private hands. This takes place alongside the growth in gated communities and increasing spatial and social segregation.

37. Community-based organizations have a key role in bringing about change. Despite the limited support they receive, they have had repeated success (see examples below), although too often they (and local NGOs) are excluded from the planning, construction and financial control of new housing and infrastructure.

Transport

38. The human love affair with individualized and motorized transport (primarily cars and scooters) continues to contribute to the deteriorating ecological conditions in cities and the consequent economic loss caused by traffic congestion. This is worsened by a steady decrease in public support for public transportation systems. Without policy coherence on the national level related to decreasing the use of cars, this trend is likely to continue. Priority should be given to good quality public transport, non-motorized forms of transport (including walking and bicycling that give, owing to the increased number of people on the streets, security as well as health benefits) and good communication systems.

Economic development

39. In this era of globalization, local communities are increasingly confronted with uncertainties owing to the relocation of production facilities and the closing down of subsidiaries of foreign-owned corporations. Many communities find their local industries more and more dependent, if not wholly owned, by distant multinational corporations. This increases economic insecurity and decreases the reinvestment of profits in local communities. Management of large corporate entities is no longer in any way attached to the local community. The threat of relocation hampers the ability of communities to cooperate effectively and on equal footing with local corporate entities to improve environmental conditions around industrial sites. The lack of corporate accountability is a major barrier to the development of inclusive local communities.

40. Local production and consumption, involving small and medium-sized enterprises in a participatory manner, can contribute a great deal to improving the local economy as well as the local environment, including through significant reductions in transportation costs. National and local governments are limited in what they can do to stimulate local production-consumption schemes by national or international trading and investment rules.

Urban planning

41. In many cities around the world there is a similar situation of concentrated business districts, industrial zones, residential areas (high and low density), including slums and urban sprawl. As urbanization increases, lessons about good practice in urban planning need to be widely disseminated. Good urban planning, involving real citizen participation, can contribute significantly to relieving the social and environmental injustices currently being experienced within human settlements.

42. Urban sprawl, owing to increased transport emissions and costs (with the adjacent issues of more people in cars than in streets, leading to increased security problems), imposes great strains on the living environment, and an even higher impact on surrounding lands. Moreover, the focus on city centre regeneration has led to neglect of the needs of the existing suburbs, making it likely that in the next decades we will be confronted with increasing problems there.

III. Activities and case studies of non-governmental organizations on the implementation of water and sanitation and human settlements projects

43. The activities of NGOs in the area of sustainable development projects are many and varied. Some involve direct actions to improve the living conditions in specific neighbourhoods, including actions to improve access to local water supply and sanitation, others tackle the surrounding natural environment or work to secure and improve participation mechanisms, while some undertake policy research and advocacy to create appropriate socio-economic conditions. The case studies below furnish a body of knowledge rooted in the experience of practitioners rather than theorists, illustrating the practical challenges faced and overcome.

44. A paper of this nature is unlikely to capture the enormous amount of activity undertaken at all these levels by the tens of millions of community-based organizations and NGOs worldwide. For instance, in Latin America, from the late 1960s onwards, it was largely local NGOs that developed more participatory models of working with low-income populations in tenements and squatter settlements, while they also helped fight for a return to democracy and for more accountable local government. In Asia and Africa, NGOs working with community organizations have been at the forefront of challenging the large-scale evictions promoted by national, state and local governments, as well as developing more effective models for upgrading squatter settlements.

45. There are two different kinds of partnerships to increase effectiveness in poverty reduction and sustainable development efforts. The first is through working with the private sector, especially for urban infrastructure (including provision for water and sanitation) and, in some cases, housing finance. The second is working with the urban poor, including their community organizations and local NGOs. As far as extending and improving the provision for water and sanitation, privatization proved disappointing: it did not succeed in bringing in large new sources of capital for investment from private markets (which had been one of the justifications for promoting it); and private companies were interested primarily in large cities with sizeable middle classes rather than the smaller, poorer urban settlements where most

of those without adequate provision actually live. In the area of housing finance, some private sector or public-private partnerships succeeded in expanding the number of modest-income households that could access housing finance, but had little or no success in reaching the poorest groups.

46. The second kind of partnership has been more successful. In at least 11 nations, there are now federations formed by the urban poor and homeless that have developed their own poverty reduction programmes, drawing on their own resources and capacities and negotiating with local and national governments for support. In most of these nations, there are also NGOs that work in very close partnership to support the federations. In many other nations, comparable organizations are developing.

A. Case studies on water and sanitation

1. Rainwater harvesting

47. In Africa, the International Rainwater Harvesting Association has been promoting a broadly designed platform to ensure that rainwater harvesting technologies are a fundamental part of sustainable development. Recognizing that the majority of people in Africa suffer from poverty resulting from food insecurity and scarcity of drinking water, the Association works to mainstream rainwater harvesting as a readily available local resource in development agendas for sustained livelihoods and Millennium Development Goal implementation strategies. The Association stresses the importance of synergies among various ministries of water, rural development, environment, housing and economic development, as well as the need for national Governments to establish institutional frameworks that encompass rural, urban, peri-urban environments to promote and design five year plans of action on rainwater harvesting. Strengthening rainwater harvesting networks will facilitate the promotion of, and cross fertilization of, knowledge, promote the building of a database of best practices and strengthen regional cooperation in the African continent. The Association also endeavours to mainstream rainwater harvesting expertise into educational policies and works with educational institutions to widely disseminate such understanding.

48. In Pakistan, the use of the rainwater harvesting concept in water management and local area development in the drylands for combating desertification and poverty is provided by the Society for Conservation and Protection of the Environment. The Society is currently working in three districts, Malir, Dadu and Tharparkar in Sindh Province. The Society has launched a campaign to protect agricultural and pastoral communal lands and to promote rainwater harvesting through building small check dams and water collection ponds in the villages, with the help of local communities. Such activities have resulted in the enhancement of aquifers and expanded the availability of water for drinking and livestock use. The Society is now incorporating water purification into community development by introducing biosand filtration technology.

2. Integrated Slums Development Programme, Pakistan

49. Also in Pakistan, the Integrated Slums Development Programme of *Anjuman Samaji Behbood* (ASB) in Faisalabad has been facilitating the laying of water and

sanitation systems in low lying areas of the city, utilizing the community's own resources in an innovative way.

50. In Hassanpura, NGO research showed that the residents paid heavily for the purchase of water and solid waste collection. In 1995, cash spending of Hassanpura equalled $100 on a daily basis when average household income per household was $2. Residents also were spending inordinate amounts on medicines, house repairs and the procurement of basic services. After three years, through self-help and the work of ASB, residents financed and constructed their own primary and secondary sanitation and water works and set up maintenance of infrastructure in collaboration with the municipality. As a result of the efforts of ASB, 5,302 households now enjoy water and sanitation services, 109,499 feet of pipes have been laid and 17.3 million rupees, or $0.299 million United States dollars, have been earned by residents of low income areas. In the absence of this work, residents would have paid 850 million rupees, or $14.66 million dollars, over 10 years for medicines, water supply and solid waste collection.

51. The fundamental work of ASB has been in aligning stakeholder responsibilities and relationships. The NGO has progressed beyond participation to orchestrating and mediating previously estranged stakeholders to collaborate, while staying within its specific mandates. The community constructed its own tertiary and secondary sanitation works, linking them to primary municipal works. In its relations with local communities, ASB clearly established that it is a teacher not contractor.

3. Hornad River Basin Coalition, Slovak Republic

52. In 2002, in the historical region of Upper Abov, located in both Hungary and Slovakia, the civic association Water Partners International (SOSNA), started the Hornad River Coalition between 14 villages in Slovakia and 19 villages in Hungary. The Slovakian area is host to a number of large pollution sources, including steel plants and waste incineration plants, although other regions of the river basin are characterized by well preserved oxbows and wetlands, hilly areas covered by forests and important cultural and historical sites. A "river coalition", which is a cross-sectoral agreement prepared with the cooperation of interested groups along the selected watershed, including local self-governmental groups, the river management company, the environmental protection agency, local industry, farmers, schools, NGOs and small businesses, was set up. Secondly a "river contract" was written, signed by all participants and expressing their willingness to realize concrete activities for the improvement of ecological, social and economic conditions in the watershed. Participants also accepted responsibilities such as decreasing pollution by certain limits, adopting clean technologies and carrying out practical watershed-friendly activities. The "river contract" has now been signed by 25 organizations from all sectors.

B. Case studies on human settlements

1. Slum-dwellers federations

53. **India**: The Indian NGO, Society for the Protection of Child Rights (SPARC), and its alliance with women's cooperatives (*Mahila Milan*), formed by slum and pavement dwellers and the National Slum Dwellers Federation, are working in many

different locations in India to improve housing and living conditions and basic service provision as well as to support savings groups reaching hundreds of thousands of low-income dwellers. This alliance, based on what low-income groups and their organizations can do for themselves, has shown how work in many different areas can contribute to poverty reduction, including community-based and community-managed savings and credit groups, house construction, the development of community-designed, built and managed toilet blocks and community-managed resettlement programmes. With some 700,000 households active in 52 urban areas, the alliance has managed resettlement programmes involving over 20,000 households and a community-managed public toilet programme serving hundreds of thousands of low-income dwellers.

54. **South Africa**. The South African Homeless People's Federation and its support NGO, People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter, have helped secure land for housing for tens of thousands of its members and also helped them design and build new homes with provision for water, sanitation and other infrastructure. The Federation has around 100,000 households as members, formed into over 1,500 autonomous savings and credit groups that help poor households build their own asset base and provide access to credit to shield the poor from economic shocks. Perhaps as importantly, the Federation has demonstrated to national, State and local governments the capacity of urban poor households to design, build and manage their own homes and neighbourhoods much more cheaply and effectively than the contractor-built "low-income housing estates" that the Government also funds. The South African Federation has also helped many other urban poor federations to set up and expand into other African nations.

55. **Kenya**. The Kenyan NGO, Pamoja Trust, and the urban poor federation (*Muungano wa Wanvijiji*) work in many informal settlements where a high proportion of Kenya's urban population live — in Nairobi and several other urban centres. Building a consensus within informal settlements and a representative community structure is particularly important in Kenya because of the conflicting priorities within settlements between landlords (the "structure owners") and their tenants as well as the ethnic divisions that politicians have long manipulated. The organizations of the urban poor are based on community-based savings schemes. Slum enumerations and house modelling initiatives undertaken by the federation (where communities develop their preferred design for housing) have helped to build local consensus on upgrading and tenure and develop community capacity to manage these issues. This also helps to build a critical mass of communities to engage municipal authorities or national government while building the capacities of its leadership.

56. Many other urban federations are also showing success: programmes under way in Cambodia responded to the effectiveness of the Solidarity and Urban Poor Federation there, while thousands of urban poor households have negotiated land sites on which to build in Zimbabwe. Despite the political difficulties in the country, the Zimbabwean federation has 45,000 members.

2. Networking, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability

57. The Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) brings together 100 NGOs from North America, Western and Central Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Thirty members of ANPED are networks themselves, significantly

increasing the number of NGOs and community-based organizations linked to its work. For the past six years, ANPED has undertaken many activities within its Local Action for Sustainability Programme. The primary activity has been to link locally active NGOs and community-based organizations within the network, in exchanging skills, knowledge and experiences in order to excel at the local level in action for sustainable development, public participation and community involvement. Where possible, new subjects are introduced with the help of external experts. As such, a strong network of locally active groups has evolved, which ensures that, within the ANPED region, expertise exists to support local communities in becoming sustainable.

3. Global Action Plan for the Earth International

58. Agenda 21 established that sustainable development can only be realized if a strong local movement is initiated. In this regard, one vehicle that emerged is the "EcoTeam Programme", developed by Global Action Plan for the Earth (GAP). Developed by a team of international social scientists and consultants, the programme offers citizens not only a guideline for the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle but also a support structure for its day-to-day implementation. In an EcoTeam, 6 to 8 participants, mostly neighbours, set out their options to use less energy, fuel, water and materials in their households, aided by a coach, a workbook and a feedback system. In all 18 countries (northern including Central and Eastern European countries) where varieties of this programme have run, teams have found that they could easily reduce their use of energy by 5 to 30 per cent, with, as collateral benefits, lower energy bills and good neighbourly relations. An estimated 50,000 people participated, spread over 18 countries. Subsequently EcoTeam members have participated in other local sustainability initiatives, such as local Agenda 21 working groups, car-sharing schemes, twin city exchanges, Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) associations and campaigns for sustainable regional retail products and outlets.

59. However successful and innovative, the GAP organization worldwide has had a tough struggle for survival. Governments, utilities and other donors tend to be wary of supporting multi-issue, people-oriented approaches of this type. Secondly, although volunteers could easily be recruited for this positive empowering work, in most countries the period during which the public was ready to commit to this structured, predominantly green type of programme was rather short (1992-1997). Nevertheless, new varieties continue to be developed and used, including programmes for schools and communities.

4. Habitat International Coalition

60. The Habitat International Coalition is dedicated to action for the universal recognition, defence and full implementation of the right of all to a secure place in which to live in peace and dignity. The Coalition acts as an international pressure group in defence of the rights of the homeless, the poor and the inadequately housed. It promotes the creation of awareness among the public in general about human settlement problems as well as the exchange of information on these problems and their solutions among its members. It functions as a platform for the formulation of NGO policies and strategies in the field of human settlements and acts as their spokesperson in contacts with international organizations. The Coalition aims to attain these objectives by means of:

(a) Mounting campaigns, sometimes in cooperation with other NGOs and community-based organizations and social movements;

(b) Holding seminars and conferences;

(c) Publishing statements, reports, newsletters and other study and information materials;

(d) Undertaking research and other projects;

(e) Supporting networks and information exchanges among its members and other NGOs social movements and organizations;

(f) Other legal means.

5. Sustainable community movements in Appalachia, United States of America

61. Grass-roots movements in the poor rural areas of the Appalachian Mountains of the United States are working against a history of domestic exploitation, colonialism and landlessness, including:

(a) Mountaintop removal and the massive automation in the Appalachian coalfields;

(b) Deforestation caused by the impact of chip mills and air pollution related to coal-fired power generation and vehicle emissions;

(c) Hyper-development of higher elevations for tourism;

(d) Overconsumption of surface and ground water and contamination from mining, petrochemical, agriculture and weak development regulations;

(e) Corporate power usurping community rights;

(f) Continued deindustrialization and rising unemployment in southern Appalachia.

62. As national policies divert vast resources away from communities in Appalachia, environmental and social conditions continue to deteriorate. The Appalachian Coalition for Just and Sustainable Communities was formed in 2002 to stimulate networking and to use popular education and research to empower grass-roots change. The Coalition envisions an "Appalachian Agenda 21" and members are integrating global perspectives to inform their efforts towards that end.

63. Distressed communities are looking for development alternatives, not for aesthetic reasons but out of necessity. This thread binds the people of Appalachia with many others worldwide. The plight of Appalachia shows that even in "developed" nations, policies are developed and implemented that are not supportive of sustainable community development.

6. Experiences with local Agenda 21

64. Since 1992, around 7,000 local Agenda 21s have developed around the world. While these have been mostly led and managed by local governments, evaluation programmes show that the most successful ones are those where the local communities have played an active part in developing and running the programmes. The local Agenda 21 movement has also shown that it is possible to engage with communities on the theme of sustainable development and for communities and

elected bodies to work together on practical projects to improve quality of life locally while also helping meet targets globally. New networks, such as the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, have shown that success is often less about the issues being tackled and more about effective governance and cooperation between sectors and disciplines. For example: In Flanders in Belgium, the Government provides extra financing if local authorities commit to developing local Agenda 21s. The Government also supports a regional network of NGOs to act as support and focal point for civil society activities.

65. One positive example of the implementation of a local Agenda 21 initiative is in the town of Nakuru, Kenya, the fifth largest town in the country, at the edge of the Nakuru National Park. The local Agenda 21 process has allowed for the formation of key partnerships between a range of organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Kenyan Wildlife Service, local community-based groups, businesses, NGOs and donors. A strategic structure plan for the town has been agreed, which deals with the issue of environmental sustainability as well as meeting the needs of its residents. City-to-city cooperation, in this case between Nakuru and the Belgian town of Leuven, has also been a key part of the process.

IV. Analysis of the role of Governments and other major groups in relation to water, sanitation and human settlements

66. This section assesses the role played by Governments and the remaining eight major groups in implementing policies and projects relating to sustainable water, sanitation and human settlements.

Governments

67. Governments are genuinely committed to sustainable development and poverty alleviation, as reflected in their international pledges and numerous national policy frameworks. However, a viable mechanism for translating these aspirations into action is still missing and the response to requirements on the ground remains incredibly slow. The very first step is to develop water management plans by 2005, as called for in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and to commit adequate resources to the attainment of agreed goals and targets. Policy autonomy is central, and must not be undermined by global economic liberalization rules or conditionalities imposed by the multilateral financial institutions and donors.

68. The vastly altered post 9/11 geo-political scenario, the elusive nature of peace, security and stability, increased military spending, counter-terrorism measures that have undermined human rights, the protracted war in Iraq, the quagmire of reconstruction, weakened multilateralism, unaltered and inequitable global trade and financial architectures have all coalesced to make the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including sustainable development, more elusive than ever. This inevitably affects the level of development assistance required to realize these goals.

Business and industry

69. The consensus among NGOs is that business and industry retain the highest potential for affecting the achievement of the global goals and targets for water,

sanitation and human settlements. They are well placed to thwart, even subvert, attempts towards the realization of such goals. The challenge is to realize their potential within a framework of publicly accountable rules.

70. Multinational enterprises can provide employment, technology, training and financial resources to local communities in all these areas. In some cases, such enterprises have been known to introduce higher environmental, health and safety standards, but they have also become notorious in terms of profit repatriation, focusing on short-term profits and relocating the moment they smell declining profits. They also enhance economic insecurity by distancing themselves from the real needs of local communities and by not being adequately open and transparent in their dealings.

71. The small and medium-sized enterprises that form the bulk of local economic activity generally have better and closer ties to local communities. They also have an interest and stake in the local investment climate. They should become a stronger part of local sustainable consumption and production schemes and should be supported in order to contribute in more concrete ways to reducing the ecological footprint.

72. The willing acknowledgement of all segments of business and industry, including the accounting, investment and financial sectors, of the need to adhere to strong enforceable government regulations and standards will help in defining and refining their priorities and constructive roles. Community participation and enforced accountability are tools that can greatly contribute to maximizing their potential.

Trade unions

73. Organized workers can contribute significantly to improving the social conditions of people working for business and industry. In many cases, workers have hands-on experience with sustainability issues and have practical ideas for innovations and improving existing practices, such as those relating to saving water or reducing pollution. As major organizers of people, trade unions can contribute significantly in terms of educating their members on choosing a sustainable path of development that will simultaneously improve the quality of their lives while preserving the environment for present and future generations. The commitment, including an implementation framework, by the trade unions at the Commission on Sustainable Development to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns is a valuable example.

Women

74. Women are the most vital of all links in the sustainability chain. It has been proven, time and time again, that any activity at the local level that does not involve and empower women is a non-starter and bound to fail. No issue in the field of sustainable development is more relevant to women than water and sanitation. Yet in many regions of the world women remain marginalized from decision-making on these issues.

75. Gender mainstreaming is only now finding its way into the global vocabulary. Much more needs to be done to ensure it becomes second nature in thought processes and practical arrangements. Only when women are recognized as valuable

custodians of the ecosystems will efforts to improve service delivery at all levels bear fruit.

Youth

76. It is not simply a cliché that the future belongs to the youth of today. What they inherit from the policies we implement today will determine whether and how well they will live. Youth movements are gradually being geared into action and to take on a more proactive role in local planning for sustainability. They must be made more aware of the power they wield through broader awareness-raising programmes, and there ought to be greater opportunities for youth to participate in sustainable development processes.

Farmers

77. As primary suppliers of food products and raw materials for production, no one can deny the central role farmers play in terms of food security, food sovereignty and public health. Water is the life blood of their livelihoods and they have a major stake in ensuring a steady access to the water supply. They hold the key to sustainable water use and must jealously guard freshwater supplies. To be able to do this, farmers require all the support they can muster, especially at the local level. Traditional and small farmers have been marginalized in decisions regarding the choice of technologies, seeds, and practices. They are victims of agricultural systems and practices (promoted for decades by agribusiness, multilateral institutions and national governments) that are extractive and chemical-intensive, polluting waters and soil, as well as eroding biodiversity. While some farmers have organized themselves and begun to work with other civil society groups, much more needs to be done to ensure that their voices are heard and listened to.

Indigenous peoples

78. Despite recent United Nations efforts to address the concerns of indigenous peoples, it is clear that a lot more needs to be done if we are to protect their rights to their land, resources and knowledge so that they can sustain their livelihoods. Increased recognition by Governments and the scientific community of the water rights and knowledge base of indigenous peoples is needed. The scientific and technological underpinning of their knowledge base can be built upon for the benefit of all communities (for example, early warning systems for the prevention of natural disasters, the case in point being the floods in Mozambique, where indigenous communities had their own information).

Scientists

79. Closing the wide gap in the translation and transmission of current scientific knowledge to the wider global community is perhaps the biggest challenge for scientists. There is no shortage of studies on urban planning, sustainable housing, sustainable delivery of public services and the like. The scientific community in general and universities in particular have a duty to inform, share and help demystify their respective disciplines and to help all stakeholders to move from words to deeds towards a sustainable society. They must work more closely with community-based organizations and assist in identifying simple ways to make

sustainability a reality for all. At the same time, they must also acknowledge gaps in scientific understanding and promote the precautionary principle in resource use and management.

Local authorities

80. Local authorities are the obvious centres for community building, local planning and sustainable development. This group has, in many parts of the world, been identified as having ultimate responsibility for managing water, sanitation and even housing systems and they deserve more support and clearer roles within national structures. If they are to do their jobs properly, they must also have the right tools, adequate resources and access to information from all other stakeholders.

81. While many local authorities have done excellent work in raising awareness and promoting sustainability, many others remain closed to public participation and do not provide information to affected citizens. Given the right circumstances, local authorities are well positioned to focus various sectors of society on the setting and implementation of joint agendas, ensuring policy coherence and a holistic approach to community-building at the local level. In short, local authorities need to empower their constituencies while also being empowered themselves in this chain of implementation.

V. Conclusions

82. Water, sanitation and human settlements policies involve every area of public concern. As such, they must be addressed holistically and comprehensively. Whatever approach is settled upon, it must face the light of constant public scrutiny if it is to be effective and meaningful to the bulk of humanity. Making safe drinking water available is not only a technical problem, but also a social challenge, encompassing issues including ownership, community rights and management concerns, the issue of water wastage, the burden of repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure, corruption, lack of accountability, the choice of options and the quantity of resources allocated.

83. Achieving sustainable human settlements requires a cross-cutting (from the perspective of all three pillars of sustainable development) approach to building sustainable communities, rectifying environmental and social injustices (including gender aspects) and achieving sustainable production and consumption patterns, while ensuring economic and social innovation and development. Public participation (the fourth pillar of sustainable development) is crucial in this process. All this must be done while also meeting basic human needs.

84. Many successful examples of sustainable water and sanitation projects and human-settlement development are developed and managed by community-based organizations and NGOs, yet these groups frequently do not participate in national policy schemes or even grander international schemes. Policies are needed to reverse current processes marginalizing crucial groups in society that play a vital role in building sustainable communities and integrated water policies.

85. Globalization in its current form has increased economic insecurities, especially in poorer neighbourhoods. The lack of participatory structures and

accountability makes communities relatively powerless in ensuring environmental and social sustainability.

86. Human settlements are complex entities. Any strategy for sustainability needs to work with different disciplines and sectors, and just as every practitioner needs to understand those working around her or him, so Governments need to ensure that plans for sustainable development are integrated across the sectors and genuinely meet international targets while also meeting the needs of the poorest.

87. A primary concern is the protection and conservation of water catchment areas and the restoration of those that have been degraded and destroyed, such as wetlands. Deforestation and degradation of water catchment areas has been going on without adequate checks. The ecosystem approach should be integrated into water resource management policies at all levels.

88. Human rights standards have a key role to play in sustainable water development. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides a framework for action that is anchored to legal accountability, which should be recognized by the Commission on Sustainable Development as a means to secure the right to water for all. As such, it should be reflected in future water management policies, including all national water management plans, which are expected to be in place by 2005.

89. The vital role of water resources in rural and urban livelihoods should be appreciated since water is an essential resource for reducing vulnerabilities through attaining food security, alleviating poverty and enhancing people's health.

90. There is a need to strengthen coordination and cooperation for the mobilization of both internal and external resources, and for the wise use of such resources, as well as to strengthen efforts to increase budget allocations for water resource management, sanitation and human settlements. Financial and other commitments must be honoured. The type and nature of conditionalities must be fundamentally reviewed rather than imposed. The donor community must rely less on standard blueprints for water development and pay more attention to small-scale water management and service provision options, which should be replicated and scaled up.

91. There is an urgent need to introduce innovative approaches in involving the private sector. The adverse impacts of resource privatization and overexploitation now call for firm regulations and strong enforcement. This will help conserve and improve the current rural and urban environments and promote corporate social accountability and good practices in private business.